

Washington State Senator • 34th Legislative District

Erik Poulsen

2007 Legislative Review

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Please keep in touch

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Standing Committees

Sen. Erik Poulsen represents the 34th District, which encompasses West Seattle, Burien, White Center and Vashon Island. He is Chair of the Senate Water, Energy & Telecommunications Committee and a member of Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation and Rules committees.

Dear Neighbors,

The legislative session that concluded in April was historic for education, the environment and families.

The Legislature passed a constitutional amendment that does away with the unfair supermajority requirement for local school levies. Other projects need only a simple majority. The measure must be ratified by voters in November.

We took the boldest step ever in combating global warming. Legislation I championed will make Washington one of the only states with a legal requirement to cut greenhouse gases back to 1990 levels. It will reduce the amount of electricity generated by burning coal and promote the use of biofuels made here in Washington.

Washington also became the first state to ban toxic flame retardants known as "PBDEs" that are showing up in people and marine life.

And we became just the second state, after California, to adopt paid family leave for all workers. The original proposal I sponsored would have allowed people up to five paid weeks off to care for a sick family member, bond with their newborns and handle emergency situations. The legislation was scaled back to cover only the care of a new child, but it's a great first step in the right direction.

But there were some big disappointments, too.

While the Legislature approved a sweeping cleanup plan for Puget Sound, House leaders denied a vote on my legislation to protect tiny Maury Island from the massive expansion of a sand and gravel mining operation that could harm their only source of drinking water as well as some of the finest salmon and Orca habitat left in the Sound.

I vow to take up this fight again next session. In the meantime, thank you for the privilege of representing you in the state Senate.

Respectfully,

A blue ink handwritten signature of Erik Poulsen, written in a cursive style.

Senator Erik Poulsen

Protecting our natural resources

The environment has been one of the biggest winners of the past two legislative sessions. From adopting tougher vehicle emission standards, to developing minimum content standards for renewable fuels, to becoming the first state in the country to require green building standards, Washington has become a model state for passing progressive environmental policies. As Chair of the Water, Energy & Telecommunications Committee, I'm proud to report that we made even more advances this session.

Combating climate change

Washington is particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts because of our dependence on snowpack for summer stream flows and because the anticipated rise in sea levels threatens our coastal communities.

Around the same time an international panel of scientists concluded that global warming is real and human activity is partly to blame, I introduced legislation to address those problems and accelerate Washington's role in combating climate change.

Among other things, my bill will:

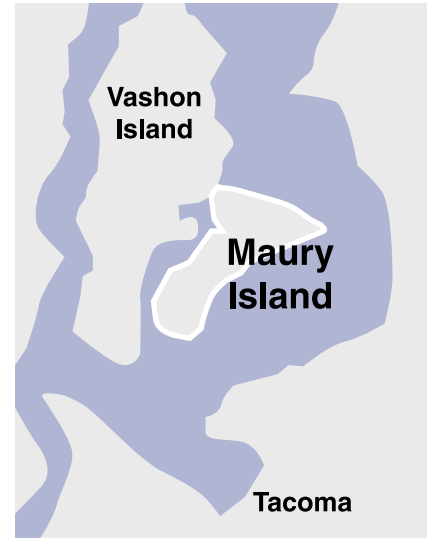
- Significantly reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, beginning in 2020 with a reduction to 1990 emission levels.
- Prohibit utilities from entering into long-term contracts with coal-fired power plants unless they meet emission standards of the cleanest gas-fired plants.
- Encourage development of clean, renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar and tidal power.

Maury Island, the crown jewel of Puget Sound

If you want to see a perfect picture of marine health, you need look no further than the Maury Island Aquatic Reserve. It was established in 2000 by the previous Commissioner of Public Lands, who oversees the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The reserve was later ratified by our current Lands Commissioner – but it is now a reserve in name only, because DNR's new "management plan" grandfathers Glacier Northwest's plot to extract 40 million tons of sand and gravel from Maury Island during the next 40 years. The material will be shipped across Puget Sound by towboats pulling barges, some the size of a football field.

Glacier Northwest argues it has the right to use our public tidelands to maximize their profits because it spent so much time and money securing permits. But I think the fact we allowed them to get this far represents a failure of our state's permitting process.



Furthermore, it makes no sense for taxpayers to spend billions of dollars restoring Puget Sound at the same time we're allowing one of the most pristine places left in the Sound to be obliterated by this mining expansion. Reviving my legislation to protect Maury Island (see my opening letter) is job one for next session.



Saving our Sound

Puget Sound is a beautiful sight to behold, but beneath the surface it is desperately ill. Stormwater runoff, sewage from septic tanks, rampant development, population growth and other factors are all conspiring against the Sound's vitality.

To ensure we leave a legacy of a clean, healthy Sound for our children, I sponsored a bill to create the Puget Sound Partnership. It defines an action agenda and establishes a science panel to measure progress. The 2007-09 state budget made a \$238 million down payment on the estimated \$8 billion it will take to restore the Sound by 2020.

Phasing out dangerous toxins

Washington became the first state in the nation to phase out the use of some fireproofing chemicals in TVs, computers and certain furniture. Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), which leach out of the items they're added to and enter the environment, have been detected in people and marine life.

Building security for our future today

The Legislature passed a two-year budget that builds security for Washington's future today. We made historic investments in education and health care, and set aside money for the future.

Here's what the budget does:

Education

- Funds full-day kindergarten, starting with the state's highest poverty schools;
- Fully funds Initiative 728 for smaller class sizes;
- Fully funds Initiative 732 for increases in teacher pay;
- Invests a record amount — \$880 million — in K-12 school construction;
- Adds 9,700 new enrollments at our four-year and two-year institutions of higher learning; and



- Expands the eligibility of financial aid, so more middle-class families have access.

Health care

- Provides health care coverage for 39,000 more children; and
- Adds 3,000 enrollments to the Basic Health Plan.

Natural resources

- Funds the Puget Sound cleanup and salmon recovery efforts;
- Makes a record investment in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program; and
- Funds increased maintenance for the state park system.

Savings

- Leaves an ending fund balance of \$724 million – including \$165 million in a constitutionally protected, hard-to-tap Rainy Day Fund.

Transportation

Vashon foot ferries, West Seattle water taxis — King County to step in

At the end of April, the King County Council voted to create a countywide ferry district, which will enable operation of passenger-only ferry service to various parts of the county, including Vashon Island. The district could also support year-round Elliot Bay water taxi service between West Seattle and Pier 55. These services would help cut down on the number of vehicles on our roads.

Ferry fares frozen

To ease the pressure of constant fare increases on ferry riders, we froze ferry fares until Sept. 1, 2009.

Viaduct solution moves forward

The people of Seattle have spoken — they want neither a new tunnel nor to replace the unsafe Alaskan Way viaduct with a like structure. Where does that leave us? The mayor, governor, legislators and regional leaders have finally agreed to move forward on that decision together.

In the meantime, the Legislature has approved a \$915 million plan to start work on the north and south ends of the viaduct. This will be a huge plus for commuters from West Seattle, Burien, White Center, Vashon-Maury and elsewhere who rely on the viaduct to access the city. I'm pushing hard for significant



mitigation that includes expanded water-taxi service, a wider Spokane Street viaduct, new on- and off-ramps, better transit service, and various other means to make life more bearable while the viaduct is out of commission.

34th District projects fare well

I secured funding for several important local projects that will improve the quality of life in our community.

- **White Center Heights Park: \$500,000.** This underdeveloped park is located at a hub of activity for children and families. White Center Elementary School, the Boys & Girls Club and Greenbridge Development are across the street.
- **Duwamish Education Center: \$2 million.** The Duwamish Apprenticeship and Education Center serves the business and industrial community through a growing variety of programs, including apprenticeships, industrial First Aid and safety, and flagging and traffic control certification.
- **Neighborhood House, High Point Neighborhood Center: \$2 million.** Caseworkers provide tutoring, citizenship classes, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, job training, case management, community health programs and transportation to more than 8,500 low-income people each year.
- **South Seattle Community College: More than \$2 million** for maintenance and repairs to various buildings.
- **Seahurst Park: \$500,000.** This vibrant beachfront park is located in Burien.
- **Seattle Chinese Garden: \$500,000.** Located at South Seattle Community College, the 4.6-acre site will be one of the largest Chinese gardens outside China, showcasing plants, stone, architecture and water elements customary to Chinese gardens.



Gov. Chris Gregoire and I celebrate legislative victories at a recent gathering in West Seattle.

- **Senior Center of West Seattle: \$500,000.** At this multipurpose facility, older adults can come together to fulfill their social, fitness and intellectual needs.
- **West Seattle Foodbank, Community Resource Center: \$400,000.** This new center will build self-esteem and personal security, while reconnecting families to support networks.
- **Longfellow Creek Greenspace Expansion: \$300,000.** Longfellow Creek, one of only four natural waterways left within the Seattle city limits, runs three miles through the Delridge Valley and empties into the Duwamish River. The acquisition will help protect 16 acres along the creek.
- **Duwamish Longhouse: \$275,000.** The Duwamish Tribe is constructing a longhouse consisting of traditional Salish designs.
- **Library Connection at Greenbridge: \$200,000.** The library will comprise a significant part of the Greenbridge Community Center.
- **ArtsWest Playhouse and Gallery: \$150,000.** West Seattle's Arts West presents community theater and art exhibitions.
- **White Center Emergency Food Assistance: \$184,000.** Food Lifeline distributes more than 21 million pounds of food each year to more than 250 community agencies, including one in White Center.

Status of other key bills...	Passed	Failed
All-day kindergarten I voted in favor of phasing in all-day kindergarten, beginning with our highest poverty schools.	✓	
Cell phone ban I voted to prohibit driving and talking on a cell phone without a hands-free device.	✓	
Crane safety In the wake of a crane collapse that killed a man and damaged buildings in Bellevue last fall, the Legislature approved a bill to require certification for cranes and operators.	✓	
Domestic partnerships I sponsored this bill, which will allow gays, lesbians and unmarried seniors some of the same rights of married couples, including hospital visitation, emergency health care decisions and property inheritance when there is no will.	✓	
Family and medical leave We passed a bill that would grant up to five weeks of leave to parents who want to care for an adopted or newborn child.	✓	
Health care: children and young adults Not only are we fulfilling our commitment to insure all children by 2010 – as our budget funds an additional 39,000 children in the next two years – we are also requiring insurance companies to let adults add their adult children (ages 19 to 25) to their health insurance policies.	✓	
Mental health parity In 2005 we passed legislation requiring commercial health policies covering more than 50 employees to offer coverage for mental illness on par with physical illnesses. We now require individual and small group plans to do the same.	✓	
Offender re-entry To curb recidivism and increase public safety, I voted in favor of a comprehensive offender re-entry bill.	✓	
Rainy Day Fund In November, voters will have the opportunity to approve a constitutional amendment creating a Rainy Day Fund. If approved, each fiscal year, 1 percent of general state revenues – or about \$130 million – would be deposited into the account.	✓	
Simple majority In November, voters will have the opportunity to decide whether school levies should be decided by a simple 50-percent-plus-one majority, instead of the current 60 percent supermajority.	✓	
Sex ed – medically accurate I voted in favor of requiring schools teaching sexual education to use accurate information, including information about birth control.	✓	
WASL reform I voted in favor of delaying until 2013 the requirement for students to pass the math and science sections of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test to graduate from high school.	✓	
Dogs in bars A headline-grabbing measure that would have allowed dogs in bars did not come up for a full vote of the Legislature.		✓
Election Day voter registration A bill that would have allowed voters to register to vote as late as Election Day did not pass.		✓
Homeowners' Bill of Rights I sponsored a bill that would have created a new home warranty for homeowners; it passed the Senate, but failed to get out of the House of Representatives.		✓
Marriage – constitutional amendment A proposed constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a male and a female was not considered.		✓
Payday lending Efforts to impose restrictions – including a cap on interest rates – on payday loans did not pass.		✓
Property tax limit A bill that would have made the 1 percent limit on the growth of property tax revenues law – rather than waiting to see how the state Supreme Court rules on whether Initiative 747 is unconstitutional – did not pass.		✓
Sonics/NASCAR I sponsored a bill to keep the Sonics in this state. That measure – and another that would have allowed a NASCAR track to be built in Kitsap County – failed to get a vote of the full Legislature.		✓

Paying tribute to a 34th District hero

The loss of King County Deputy Steve Cox last December is one of the most painful and senseless tragedies White Center has ever experienced. Your 34th District legislative delegation sponsored a resolution this session to honor his memory.

At his memorial service, some of Steve's fellow officers said he had a sixth sense for when and where crime was about to happen — he would step in and stop it. Though Steve had been a very successful deputy prosecutor, his lifelong dream was to be a cop. He wanted to come back to the community where he grew up and make it a better place. And that's exactly what he did.

We will never forget him. And we applaud the many brave police officers and fire fighters who risk their lives to protect our communities — they are everyday heroes.



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